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THE SPEECH

OF THE RIGHT HON.

CHARLES JAMES FOX,

ON THE

Speech delivered to the House of Commons,

AT THE

Opening of Parliament, Dec. 13, 1792,

COMMONLY CALLED

THE KING'S SPEECH.

With a List of those Patriots who divided in favour of
the People

THE FIFTH EDITION.

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COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN

THE KING'S SPEECH

AND THE ANSWER THEREON, AS DELIVERED IN PARLIAMENT

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1806.

THE
S P E E C H

OF THE

Right Hon. Charles James Fox.

After Lord Wycombe sat down, Mr. Fox said,

ALTHOUGH what has fallen from the Noble Lord behind me contains the substance of almost all that I have to offer, and although it produced the effects which good sense, truth, and solid argument, never fail to produce on a great body, the tacit acknowledgment of all who heard him, insomuch, that no one seemed ready to venture to rise up in answer to his Lordship, yet I must deliver my opinion on this most imminent and most alarming occasion. I am not so little acquainted with the nature of man, as not to know, that in speaking in public, in order to engage the cordial attention of the hearers, besides the efficacy of fair and candid reasoning, a man ought always to be in temper and unison with his audience. He ought to shew that however they may differ upon points, he pursues in reality the same object as themselves, the love of truth,

With this view, I shall state explicitly what are my sentiments on the subject now presented to us by the speech from the Throne. I state it then to be my opinion, that we are assembled at the most critical and momentous crisis, not only that I ever knew in the fate of this country, but that I ever read of in the history of this country---a crisis not merely interesting to ourselves and to our own condition, but to all nations and to all men---and that upon the conduct of Parliament in this crisis, depends not merely the fate of the British Constitution, but of doctrines which go to the happiness and well-being of all human kind. I hope then I am in a temper and unison with the House in this declaration of my sentiments; whether we agree in the motives of our sentiments we shall see, for I will as frankly, and as openly as possible, communicate my reasons for considering the present moment in this alarming light.

His Majesty's speech is full of a variety of assertions, or perhaps I should not make use of the word assertions, without adding, that it has also a variety of insinuations conveyed in the shape of assertions, which must impress every man with the most imminent apprehensions for the safety of every thing that is justly dear to Englishmen. It is our first duty to enquire into the truth of these assertions and insinuations so conveyed to us from the throne. I am sure I need not recur to the old Parliamentary usage of desiring, that when I speak by name of the King's speech, I mean to be considered as speaking of the speech of the Ministers, since no one will impute to me the want of the most true and sincere respect for his Majesty. It is to the speech which his Majesty has been advised by his confidential servants, to deliver from the Throne. They are responsible for every letter of it, and to them, and to them only, every observation of Gentlemen is addressed. I state it therefore to be my firm opinion and belief, that there is not one fact asserted in his Majesty's speech which is not *false*---not one assertion or insinuation which is not unfounded. Nay, I cannot be so uncandid as to believe, that even the Ministers themselves think them true. This charge upon his Majesty's Ministers is of so serious a kind, that I do not pronounce it lightly, and I desire that Gentlemen will go fairly into the consideration of the subject,
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and manifest the proper spirit of the Representatives of the People in such a moment. What the Noble Lord said is most strictly true. The great prominent feature of the speech is, that it is an intolerable calumny on the people of Great-Britain; an insinuation of so gross and so black a nature, that it demands the most rigorous enquiry, and the most severe punishment. The next assertion is, that there exists at this moment an insurrection in this kingdom. An insurrection! Where is it? Where has it reared its head? Good God! an insurrection in Great Britain! No wonder that the Militia were called out, and Parliament assembled in the extraordinary way in which they have been; but where is it? Two Gentlemen have spoken in commendation and illustration of the Speech, and yet, though this insurrection has existed for fourteen days, they have given us no light whatever---no clue---no information where to find it. The Right Hon. Magistrate tells us, that, in his high municipal situation, he has received certain information which he does not think proper to communicate to us. This is really carrying the doctrine of confidence to a length indeed---Not content with Ministers leading the House of Commons into the most extravagant and embarrassing situations, under the blind cover of confidence, we are now told that a Municipal Magistrate has information of an insurrection, which he does not chuse to lay before the Commons of England, but which he assures us is sufficient to justify the alarm that has spread over the whole country? The Hon. Gentleman who seconded the motion tells us, that the "insurrections are too notorious to be described." Such is the information which we receive from the Right Hon. Magistrate and the Hon. Gentleman who are selected to move and second the Address. I will take upon me to say, that it is not the notoriety of the insurrections which prevents them from communicating to us the particulars, but their non-existence. The speech goes on in the same strain of calumny and falsehood, and says---the industry employed "to excite discontent *on various pretexts*, and in different parts of the kingdom, has appeared to proceed "from a design to attempt the destruction of our happy "Constitution, and the subversion of all order and go-

"vernment." I desire Gentlemen to consider these words, and I demand of their honour and truth if they believe this assertion to be founded in fact. There have been, as I understand, and as every one must have heard, some slight riots in different parts; but I ask them, were not the *various pretexts* of these different tumults false, and used only to cover an attempt to destroy our happy Constitution? I have heard of a tumult at Shields--- of another at Leith; of some riot at Yarmouth, and of something of the same nature at Perth and Dundee. I ask Gentlemen if they believe that in each of these places the avowed object of the complaint of the people, was not the real one---that the sailors at Shields, Yarmouth, &c. did not really want some increase of their wages, but were actuated by a design of overthrowing the Constitution. Is there a man in England who believes this insinuation to be true? And in like manner of every other Meeting, to which, in the present spirit, men may give the name of tumultuous assembling.

I desire to know if there has been discovered any secret motive other than their open and avowed one. And yet with this conviction in our minds, we are called upon to declare directly our belief and persuasion that these things are so. We are called upon to join in the libel upon our constituents. The answer to the speech says, that we know of the tumult and disorder, but as to the actual insurrection, it more modestly makes us say, "that we are *sorry to hear* there is an insurrection."---Of the tumults and disorders then we have personal knowledge; but the insurrection we learn from his Majesty's speech.

I do not wish to enter at length into the affairs of France, which makes the next prominent passage in his Majesty's Speech; but though I do not desire to enter at much length into this part, I cannot conceal my sentiments on certain doctrines which I have heard to-night. The Hon. Gentleman, who seconded the motion, thought proper to say, as a proof that there existed a dangerous spirit in this country, that it was manifested "by the drooping and dejected aspect of many persons, when the tidings of Dumourier's surrender arrived in England." What, Sir, is this to be considered as a state of discontent, and of a preference

to Republican doctrines. That men should droop, and be dejected in their spirits, when they heard that the armies of despotism had triumphed over an army fighting for liberty; if such dejection be a proof that men are discontented with the Constitution of England, and leagued with foreigners in an attempt to destroy it, I give myself up to my country as a guilty man, for I freely confess that, when I heard of the surrender or retreat of Dumourier, and that there was a probability of the triumph of the armies of Austria and Prussia over the liberties of France, my spirits drooped, and I was dejected. What, Sir, could any man who loves the Constitution of England, who feels its principles in his heart, wish success to the Duke of Brunswick, after reading a manifesto which violated every doctrine that Englishmen held sacred, which trampled under foot every principle of justice and humanity, and freedom, and true government, and upon which the combined armies entered France, with which they had nothing to do; and when he heard, or thought he saw a probability of their success, could any man of true British feelings be other than dejected? I honestly confess that I never felt more sincere gloom and dejection in my life, for, I saw in the triumph of that conspiracy not merely the ruin of liberty in France, but the ruin of liberty in England---the ruin of the liberty of man. But am I to be told that my sorrow was an evident proof of my being connected with the French nation, or with any person in that nation; for the purpose of aiding them in creating discontent in England, or in making any attempt to destroy the British Constitution? If such conclusion were to be drawn from the dejection of those who are hostile to the maxims of tyranny, upon which the invasion of France was founded, what must we say of those men who acknowledge that they are sorry the invasion did not prosper? Am I to believe that the Hon. Gentleman, and all others, who confess their sorrow at the failure of the arms of Prussia and Austria, were connected with the Courts in Concert, and that a considerable body of persons in this country were actually in the horrid league formed against human liberty? Are we taught to bring this heavy charge against all men, whose spirits drooped there on the receipt of the news, and when it turned out that it
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was not Dumourier, but the Duke of Brunswick who had retreated*? No, he would not charge them with being confederates with the invaders of France; nor did they believe, nor durst they believe, that the really constitutional men of England, who rejoiced on the overthrow of that horrid and profligate scheme, wished to draw there-from any thing hostile the established Government of England.

But what, Sir, are the doctrines that they desire to set up by this insinuation of gloom and dejection? That Englishmen are not to dare to have any genuine feelings of their own; that they must not rejoice but by rule; that they must not think but by order; that no man shall dare to exercise his faculties in contemplating the objects that surround him, nor give way to the indulgence of his joy or grief in the emotions that they excite, but according to the instructions that he shall receive. That, in observing the events that happen to surrounding and neutral nations, he shall not dare to think whether they are favourable to the principles that contribute to the happiness of man, or the contrary: and that he must take, not merely his opinions, but his sensations from his Majesty's Ministers and their satellites for the time being!

Sir, whenever the time shall come that the character and spirits of Englishmen are to be subdued; when they shall consent to believe that every thing which happens around is indifferent both to their understandings and their hearts; and when they shall be brought to rejoice and grieve, just as it shall suit the taste, the caprice, or the ends of Ministers, then I pronounce the Constitution of this country to be extinct. We have read of religious persecutions; of the implacable oppressions of the Roman See; of the horrors of the Inquisition of Spain; but so obdurate, so hard, so intolerable a scheme of cruelty, was never engendered in the mind, much less practised by any tyrant, spiritual or temporal. For see to what lengths they carry this system of intellectual oppression. Under *various pretexts* there have been tumults and disorders, but the true design was to overturn the Constitution.—So says the

* The Manifestos of General Burgoyne, the Emperor of Germany, the King of Prussia, and the Duke of Brunswick, with other State Papers, are this day published, price 1s. 6d.

Speech,

Speech, and mark the illustration of the Right Hon. Magistrate. "There have been various Societies established in the Cities of London, instituted for the plausible purpose of merely discussing constitutional questions, but which were really designed to propogate these seditious doctrines." So then, by this new scheme of tyranny, we are not to judge of the conduct of men by their overt acts, but are to arrogate to ourselves at once the province and the power of the Deity; we are to arraign a man for his secret thoughts, and to punish him, because we chuse to believe him guilty! "You tell me indeed," says one of these municipal inquisitors, "that you meet for an honest purpose, but I know better; your plausible pretext shall not impose upon me; I know your seditious design. I will brand you for a traitor by my own proper authority." What innocence can be safe against such a power? What inquisitor of Spain, of ancient or of modern tyranny, can hold so lofty a tone? Well and nobly, seasonably and truly, has the noble Earl (Wycombe) said; and I would not weaken the sentiment by repeating the expression in terms less forcible than his own, but that the eternal truth cannot suffer by the feebleness of the terms in which it is conveyed. "There are speculative people in this country, who disapprove of the system of our Government, and there must be such men as long as the land is free, for it is of the very essence of freedom for men to differ upon speculative points." Is it possible to conceive, that it should enter into the imaginations of freemen to doubt of this truth? The instant that the general sense of the people shall question this truth, and that opinion shall be held dependant on the will of Ministers and Magistrates, from that moment, I say, I date the extinction of our liberties as a people. Our Constitution was not made, thank God, in a day. It is the result of gradual and progressive wisdom. It has grown up in a series, and never, never has the guardian protecting genius of England, been either asleep or satisfied.

———"O, but man, proud man!
 "Drest up in a little brief authority,
 "Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
 "As make the Angels weep."

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NEW

Now it seems the Constitution is complete; now we are to stand still. We are to deride the practice and the wisdom of our forefathers; we are to elevate ourselves with the Constitution in our hands, and to hold it forth to a wondering world as a model of human perfection. Away with all further improvement, for it is impossible; away with all further melioration of the state of man in society, for it is needless. Let no man touch this work of man, it is like the work of Heaven, perfect in all its parts, and unlike every other work of man, it is neither capable of perversion, nor subject to decay." Such is the presumptuous language that we hear, and not content with this haughty tone, they imitate the celebrated anathema of brother Peter, in the Tale of a Tub, and exclaim, "G--d confound you all eternally if you offer to believe otherways."

Now this, Sir, is the crisis which I think so truly alarming. We are come to the moment, when the question is, Whether we shall give to the King, that is, to the Executive Government, complete power over our thoughts. Whether we are to resign the exercise of our natural faculties to the Ministers for the time being, or whether we shall maintain, that in England no man is criminal, but by the commission of overt acts forbidden by the law. This I call a crisis more imminent and tremendous than any that the history of this country ever exhibited. I am not so ignorant of the present state of men's minds, and of the ferment artfully created, as not to know that I am now advancing an opinion likely to be unpopular. It is not the first time that I have incurred the same hazard. But I am as ready to meet the current of popular opinion now running in favour of those high lay doctrines, as in the year 1783, I was to meet the opposite torrent, when it was said, that I wished to sacrifice the people to the Crown. I will do now as I did then; I will act against the cry of the moment in the confidence that the reflection of the people will bear me out. I know well that there are societies who have published opinions, and circulated pamphlets containing doctrines tending, if you please, to subvert our establishments. I say that they have done nothing unlawful in this, for these Pamphlets have not been suppressed by law. Shew me the

the law that orders these books to be burnt, and I will acknowledge the illegality of their proceeding; but if their be no such law, you violate the law in acting without authority. You have taken upon you to do that for which you have no warrant, and you vote they are guilty. What is the course prescribed by law; if any doctrines are published tending to subvert the Constitution in Church and State, you may take cognizance of the fact in a Court of Law. What have you done? Taken upon you by your own authority to suppress them! to erect every man, not merely into an inquisitor, but into a spy, into an informer! to set father against father, brother against brother, and neighbour against neighbour; and in this way you expect to maintain the peace and tranquillity of the country! You have gone upon the principles of slavery in all your proceedings; you neglect in your conduct the foundation of all legitimate Government, the Rights of the People, the *rights of man*. And setting up this bugbear, you spread a panic for the very purpose of sanctifying this infringement, while again the very infringement begets and engenders the evil which you dread.

One extreme naturally leads to another. Those who dreads Republicanism, fly for shelter to the Crown. Those who desire Reform, and are calumniated, are driven by despair to Republicanism. And this is the evil that I dread. These are the extremes into which these violent agitations hurry the people to the gradual decrease of that middle order of men, who dread as much Republicanism on the one hand, as they do Despotism on the other. That middle order of men, who have hitherto preserved to this country all that is dear in life, I am sorry to say it, is daily lessening; but permit me to say, that while my feeble voice continues, it shall not be totally extinct; there shall at least be *one* man who will, in this ferment of extremes, preserve the centre point. I may be abused by one side, I may be libelled by the other; I may be branded at one and the same time with the terms of firebrand and lukewarm politician; but though I love popularity, and fairly own that there is no external reward so dear to me as the good opinion and confidence of my fellow-citizens; yet no temptation of such complacency shall ever induce me to join any
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association that has for its object a change in the basis of our Constitution, or an extension of any of these bases beyond the just proportion. I will stand in the gap, and oppose myself to all the wild projects of a newfangled theory, as much as against the monstrous iniquity of exploded doctrines. I think the latter is more our present danger than the former. I see not merely in the panic of the timorous, but in the acts of the designing, cause for alarm against the most abhorrent doctrines. The new Associations have acted with little disguise. One of them I must applaud for the sincerity of its practice. Mr. Chairman Reeves* says, that they will not only *prosecute*, but they will *convince* men, and they recommend, among other publications, a hand-bill, entitled, "A Pennyworth of Wit," in which, among other odd things, it is said, "Have you not read the Bible?—Do you not know that it is there written, that the King is the Lord's annointed?—But did you ever hear of his having anointed a Republic?" Such is the manner that these Associations are to *convince* the minds of men! In the course of the present century, their recommendation would have been prosecuted as high treason.

In the years 1715 and 1745 to have dared to say that Kings derived their power from divine right, would have been prosecuted as treason; and I ask you if, even now, this is the way to inculcate the principles of genuine loyalty? No, Sir; thank God, the people of this country have a better ground of loyalty to the House of Brunswick than divine right—namely, that they are the Sovereign of their own election; that their right is not derived from superstition, but from the choice of the people themselves; that it originated in the only genuine fountain of all royal power, the will of the many, and that it has been strengthened and confirmed by the experience of the blessings they have enjoyed, because the House of Brunswick has remembered the principle upon which they received the crown. It is rather extraordinary, Sir, that they should hold such language at this precise moment, that they should think it right to abuse Republics, at the very moment that we are called upon to protect the Republic of Holland; to spread the doctrine that kings only have di-
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* *An Answer to the Callumnies of Mr. Reeves, is published by the London Corresponding Society of Friends to the People: also a Letter from the same Body to Mr. Secretary Dundas. Price One Penny each.*

vine right may indispose your allies to receive your proposed succour. It may be asked, Would I prosecute such papers? To this I answer very candidly, I would not. I never yet saw the seditious paper that I would have thought it necessary to prosecute; but that by no means implies but that emergencies might make it proper, but surely there is nothing so essential to the true check of sedition, as impartiality in prosecution. If a government wishes to be respected, they must act with the most rigorous impartiality, and must shew that they are as determined to prevent the propagations of doctrines injurious to the Rights of the people as they are those hostile to the Rights of the Crown. If men are to be encouraged to rally round the one standard, you must not, you ought not to prevent volunteers from rallying round the other, unless you desire to stifle in the breasts of men the surest and most active principle of obedience, belief in your impartiality.

When I first heard that the Militia were called out I felt more anxiety and consternation than ever possessed my mind. I thought that certainly they had heard of some actual insurrection, or impending invasion. But when I heard that they were not called out to enable Ministers to send the troops to any distant part, to Ireland, or to Scotland, where they might know of disturbances though I did not) but that the troops were assembling round London, I firmly believed the whole to be a fraud; for I have friends in and about London, as intelligent, as vigilant, as much interested in the tranquillity of the Metropolis, as the Right Hon. Magistrate; and I was confident that an insurrection could not actually exist in London without being known. I pronounced it in my own mind to be a fraud, and I pronounce it here to be so.

I am not given to make light assertions in this House, nor do I desire to receive implicit belief. I deprecate confidence in my bare assertion. On the contrary, I state, that I believe this pretext to be a fraud, and I entreat you to enquire, that you may ascertain the truth. I know that there are societies who have indulged themselves, as I think, in silly and frantic speculations—and who have published toasts, &c. that are objectionable; but that there is any insurrection, or that any attempt was making
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to overthrow the Constitution, I deny. Now if this assertion of Ministers is a falsehood, is it an innocent falsehood? Are the people of this country playthings in the hands of Ministers, that they may frighten them and disturb them at pleasure? Are they to treat them as some weak, jealous-pated, and capricious men treat their wives and mistresses—alarm them with false stories, that they may cruelly feast on the torture of their apprehensions, and delight in the susceptibility that drown them in tears! Have they no better enjoyment than to put forth false alarms, that they may draw from the people the soothing expressions of agitated loyalty? Or do they think that these expressions, generously, readily made, in favour of the King whom the people rationally love, may extend in its influence to all the persons that are near his throne? Indulging in this passion, they may keep us incessantly in the tumult of apprehension, until at last they so habituate the mind to dread the evil in this quarter, as to look for it in no other, or to stun it by repeated shocks of fiction into an insensibility of real attack.

His Majesty in the next passage of his speech brings us to the apprehension of a war. I shall refrain at this time from saying all that occurs to me on this subject, because I wish to keep precisely to the immediate object: but never surely had this country so much reason to wish for peace. Never was a period so little favourable to a rupture with France, or with any power. I am not ready to subscribe exactly to the idea of the Noble Lord; but I wish that a motion was proposed by some person, to express our disapprobation of entering upon any war, if we can by any honourable means avoid it. Let no man be deterred by the dread of being in a minority. A minority saved this country from a war against Russia—and surely it is our duty, as it is true policy, to exert every means to avert the greatest of national calamities. In 1789 we all must remember that Spain provoked this country by an insult, which is a real aggression; we were all agreed on the necessity of the case, but did we go headlong to war? No, we determined with becoming fortitude on an armed negotiation. We did negotiate, and we avoided a war. But now we disdain to negotiate. Why? Because we
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have no Minister at Paris. Why have we no Minister there? Because France is a Republic! And so we are to pay in the blood and treasure of the people for a punctilio! If there are discontents in the kingdom! Sirs, this is the way to inflame them. It is of no consequence to any people what is the form of the Government with which they may have to treat. It is with the Governors, whatever may be the form, that in common sense and policy they can have to do, and if they should change their form and change their Governors, their course would remain the same. Having no legitimate concern with the internal state of any independent people, the road of common sense is simple and direct. That of pride and punctilio is as tangled as it is serpentine. Is the pretext the opening of the Scheldt? I cannot believe that such an object can be the real cause. I doubt, even if a war on this pretext would be undertaken with the approbation of the Dutch. What was the conduct of the French themselves under their depaved old system, when the good of the people never entered into the contemplation of the Cabinet? The Emperor threatened to open the Scheldt in 1786. Did the French go to war with him instantly to prevent it? No. They opened a negociation, and prevented it by interfering with their good offices. Why have we not so interfered? Because, forsooth, France is an unanointed Republic! Oh miserable, infatuated Frenchmen! Oh lame and inconsiderate politicians! Why, instead of breaking the holy viol of Rheims, why did you not pour some of the sacred oil on the heads of your Executive Council, that the pride of states might not be forced to plunge themselves and you into the horrors of war, rather than be contaminated by your acquaintance! How short-sighted were you to believe, that the prejudices of infants had departed with the gloom of ignorance, and that states were grown up to a state of manhood and reason!

This naturally brings us back again to the business of this day, namely, whether any Address should be agreed to or not? I desire then to put it seriously to the conscience and honour of Gentlemen to say, if they are not aiding the object of Republicans and Levellers, if they shall

shall agree to plunge this country headlong into a war, or shall agree to do any business, or to give any pledge whatever to the Crown, until they enquire and ascertain whether there is an insurrection in this country or not? Shall we declare war without enquiring, whether we are also to have commotions at home? Shall we pledge our Constitutents to submission, to compliance, without first proving to them that the strong measure of Government has been authorised by truth? If you would have the laws respected by the people, I say again, you must begin by showing that they are respected from above. If you do not prove to the people that there is an actual insurrection (for I leave out impending invasion and rebellion as these are not even pretended) you cannot withhold from them the knowledge that you have acted illegally, and how can you expect rational obedience to the laws when you yourselves counteract them? When you set up the *ratio suasoria* as the *ratio justificata*, the people clearly discern the subtlety and falsehood of your logic, and translate at once your terms into their true English of real causes and false pretences. *Ut ameris, amabilis esto* is as true in Government and Legislation, as it is in manners and private life, and is as well established by experience.

—The people will not be cheated. They will look round, and demand where this danger is to be seen. Is it in England—They see it overflowing in expressions of loyalty, and yet they libel it with imputations of insurrection. In Ireland—you know there is danger, and dare not own it. Here you have prorogued the Parliament to the 17th instant, but not to meet till the end of January for the dispatch of business, though you know that there is a most respectable and formidable Convention, (I call it formidable, because I know nothing so formidable as reason, truth, and justice) will oblige you, by the most cogent reasons to give way to demands, which the magnanimity of the nation ought to have anticipated. There you have thus prorogued the Parliament, and deprived yourselves of the means of doing that gracefully which you must do, and which you ought to have done long ago to subjects as loyal, as attached to their King, as abundant.

abundantly endowed with every manly virtue as any part of the United Kingdom. And while the claims of generous and ill-treated millions are thus protracted, and in addition to the hardship of their condition, they are insulted with the impudent assertion of the *tyrannical ascendancy*, there is a miserable mockery held out of alarms in England which have no existence, but which have no existence, but which are made the pretext of assembling the Parliament in an extraordinary way, in order in reality to engage you in a foreign contest. What must be the fatal consequence when a well judging people shall decide, what I sincerely believe; that the whole of this business is a Ministerial manoeuvre? Will they own the real truth, and say that they wanted a pretext to assemble Parliament to make up for their want of vigilance? They must take their choice, and submit to incur the indignation of their country, or feel themselves in a state of contempt. There are men who in this very act give them the praise of vigilance. They did all this, to be sure with a little harmless fraud, to prevent evils. Let us examine this their claim to vigilance.

This vigilant Ministry saw, nay, if we may take their character from their associates, hoped that France was on the brink of falling a sacrifice to the united force of Austria and Prussia, the two powers of all others, whose union would be the most dreadful thing to England, but they saw no danger in this conquest to England; though thereby these great military powers were to become maritime. They saw no danger in the union concerted between them, nay, when they had given away Poland in the mean time, because I suppose they thought that when Ockzakoff was gone, the balance of Europe went with it, and they retreated out of the field with disgrace. They gave away Poland with as little compunction as honour, and with the unenviable certainty, that their blustering was laughed at, and despised in every Court in Europe. I know that some of them have inordinate self-complacency, yet I will not be so uncandid as to conceal my honest opinion, that there is not among them a single man, whose talents for great and commanding policy have either attracted or secured

eured the confidence of any quarter of Europe. Do they boast of their vigilance? The dexterous surrender of Oczkakoff, as they now know, might have saved the fall and ruin of Poland. Do they boast of their vigilance, and had they no apprehension of the union between Austria and Prussia? Had they such total reliance on the moderation of Prussia, on his intimate friendship with, his gratitude to, his confidence in our faithful Cabinet! Do they boast of their vigilance, and yet saw nothing of their present dread for Holland and Brabant, on the 30th of September, when to the joy of every man, whose heart is warmed with the love of freedom, the Duke of Brunswick retreated before the armies of France? Were they vigilant not to foresee the consequences of that retreat, or did they flatter themselves with the weak, the false hope that still the steadiness of men bred up in the trammels of tactics and discipline, would be an overmatch for the impetuosity of men, animated by the glorious flame of liberty? If so, the battle of Jemappe ought, I should think, to have shewn vigilant men their error. That happened on the 6th of November. On the same day the Government of the Netherlands took to flight, and the news arrived in England on the 10th or 12th. What did these vigilant Ministers? On the 17th they prorogued the Parliament to the 3d of January, without even saying that it was then to meet for the dispatch of business! And yet on these vigilant men we are to repose, though in the eyes of Europe, in the hearts of Englishmen, an armament in their hands is a proof and earnest of their future humiliation!

They call for subsidiary aid from the loyalty of the people, and to procure this they have recourse to history, and look out for the lucky frauds of the former times.— They find one of the most lucky frauds was the Popish Plot of the reign of Charles the Second; The same cry they knew was impossible, but a similar one was feasible in the enmity against a Republic. The Protestant Dissenters then were now made the objects of terror, and every art was used to provoke the rage of ignorance and barbarity. The fraud was too successful; many of my friends

friends from the best motives were deluded into the snare, and that most calamitous of all measures, the proclamation, unfortunately for England, met with their countenance. I cannot better describe this calamity than by reading a passage from an eminent historian, on the fatal consequences of the delusion of the Popish plot. My friends will not suffer by being compared to the celebrated Lord Ruffel.

Now, Sir, let me address one word to my valued friends. —Let them reflect on the consequences of their recent delusion, not dissimilar to the above. The measure of the proclamation is now stated to be over. It has failed. Let them avoid all further snares of the same kind. These Declarations, which it is now the fashion to sign, I certainly cannot in general approve. Of all that I have seen, that of the Merchants must best conciliate the approbation of constitutional men, but I see and hear on every side such violent doctrines, and such afflicting measures, as no man who is actuated by the wish of preserving peace in this country can subscribe to. A noble Lord, (Lord Fielding) for whom I have a high respect, says he will move for a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. I hope not. Come from whom it may, I shall with my most determined powers oppose so dreadful a measure.

What, it may be asked, would I propose to do in hours of agitation like the present? I will answer openly. If there is a tendency in the Dissenters to discontent, because they conceive themselves unjustly suspected and cruelly calumniated, what should I do? I would instantly repeal the Test Corporation Acts, and take from them thereby all cause of complaint. If there were any persons tinctured with a Republican spirit, because they thought the representative Government was more perfect in a Republic, I would endeavour to amend the Representation of the Commons, and to prove that the House of Commons, though not chosen by all, should have no other interest than to prove itself the representative of all. If there were men dissatisfied in Scotland and Ireland, or elsewhere, on account of disabilities and exemptions, of unjust prejudices, and of cruel restrictions, I would

I would repeal the penal statutes, which are a disgrace to our law book.

If there were other complaints of grievance, I would redress them where they were really proved; but above all I would constantly, cheerfully, patiently listen: I would make it known that if any man felt, or thought he felt a grievance, he might come freely to the bar of this House and bring his proofs. And it should be made manifest to all the world, that where they did exist, they should be redressed; where they did not, that it should be made manifest. If I were to issue a proclamation, this should be my proclamation:

“ If any man has a grievance, let him bring it to the bar of the Commons House of Parliament, with the firm persuasion of having it honestly investigated.” These are subsidies that I would grant to Government. What, instead of this, is done? Suppress the complaint, check the circulation of knowledge, command that no man shall read, or that as no man under 100l. a year can kill a partridge, that no man under 20l. or 30l. a year shall dare to read or think!

I see in Westminster the most extraordinary resolutions of parochial meetings---In Soho---In St. Clements, publicans are to be threatened with the loss of their licences if they dare to suffer conversation which they think seditious. Good God, where did the Justices find this law? And publicans are to be made judges of a Libel. No paper is to be suffered but what is free from sedition; no conversation but what they shall judge loyal; although the knowledge of what is a Libel was stated to be fit only to be judged of by Sages in the law. Yet the papers recommended to be read by these Associations, are full of the most horrid doctrines. The Letter of Thomas Bull*, for instance, very modestly hints, that to exterminate the Dissenters would be an excess of virtue. Debating Societies are now found to be seditious, though I never knew London to be without them; and by what law the Magistrates can interrupt the peaceable discussion of political questions, I cannot conceive.

* JO:IN BULL in Answer to his Brother THOMAS. Price One Penny, or Seven Shillings for one hundred Copies.

I love



I love the Constitution as it is established; it has grown up with me as a prejudice, and as a habit, as well as from conviction. I know that it is calculated for the happiness of man, and that its constituent branches of King, Lords, and Commons, could not be altered or impaired without entailing on this country the most dreadful miseries. At the same time I do not think so highly of any human institution, as to believe that it incapable of being perverted. I think that we may be led asleep to our real danger by these perpetual alarms to loyalty, and that the great dread of increasing the power of the Crown, seems to be stifled, while we are insensibly degrading the power of the Commons."

Morning Chronicle, }
14th Dec. 1792. }

✍ *Mr. Fox's Speech on the Amendment of the Address to the King, which related to the War, is published, Price 2d. or 100 Copies 12s. 6d.*

The following is a correct List of the Gentlemen, in the House of Commons, who voted for the Amendment on the Address to his Majesty, for his Speech at opening the Parliament. *The Number against them was 290.*

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The true Friends of the Constitution of England will rejoice to read the above List, which gives the lie to all slanders that have been so industriously propagated of divisions among the ancient and illustrious patriots of England. There they will find the Names of RUSSELL and CAVENDISH, of BENTINCK and HOWARD, &c. &c. rallying round the Standard, Mr. FOX has has so seasonably erected, in concert with all the most shining talents of the House, to preserve that middle order of men, which in these Days of desperate extremes, was likely to be annihilated.

F I N I S.

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